Ten Days in the Oriental Korea

Kaisar

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From the Translator

I enjoy traveling and reading travelogues. When poet Kaisar came to me with a request to translate his account of traveling DPRK, I almost readily agreed to do the translation. Besides my interest in traveling, the other attracting reason that encouraged me to accept the task was my keenness to know more about Korea, a country, a nation about which my former Korean students had already evoked a lot of interest.

Although I have got some experience in translating different kinds of documents from Bengali to English and vice versa, I reminded the author of a possibility that his work might lose some literary, emotional and aesthetic quality as it always happens with any translation works. As I started reading the travelogue, being the first step of translation, I enjoyed the story. The author has continued telling his narrative in a very lucid language blending his own emotions and feelings. The flawless details of the places he visited and the events he attended during his twelve-day long visit to DPRK have made the narrative very enjoyable. In many parts of the journey, he has made himself a part of the local landscape and tried to understand the sense and sensibility of the Koreans with his poetic passion, and this will allow the readers of this book, I hope, to know the Korean history, culture and their national sentiments in a very reliable and consistent way.

Both as the first reader and translator, I have been amazed to visualize through this account how this great nation has rebuilt the country after the Korean war that smashed the whole infrastructure to ground. While the narrative has depicted an overall picture of economic development in all sectors, the massive growth in agriculture, industry, electricity and cultural sectors is really noticeable.

I could see through the impressions about the independent economic development, the prospect and final goal of improvement of the people's welfare in Korea.

Besides, I was aware of the civilized and noble moral traits of the Koreans.

I believe that the impressions will help the readers to know about Korea today, and some of the wise leadership of great leader President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il who brought up today's dramatic change in Korea.

The nation can boast of its hundred percent literacy and poverty-free society.

I would sincerely hope that the readers will enjoy the travel story.

Dr. A.K.Waliul Islam
Dhaka University

Foreword

Tagor, a poet of India, once wrote a poem when the Korean nation was suffering from the shack of control by Japanese imperialists. A passage goes:

Korea, earlier in Asia's golden era
You're one candle shining bright
The day the candle lit up still more
You'll make a good light in the Orient

Appreciating this poem I would think Tagor was not only a good poet but also a great person. And I would think in my mind's eye Korea in the Orient of the earth.

And no wonder, the DPRK is highlighted as a political, ideological and military power in the eastern corner like a pharos of the world as Tagore prophesied in his poem.

Really Korea is a bright light in the East admired in all fields of politics, military and economy.

There was a great deal of coverage in the world media about what were happening in Korea.

Days went by. As for me, a Bangladeshi writer and poet admiring Tagore the desire of being to Korea where his prophecy was materialized grew more and more.

After all, I made up mind and applied to the government to visit Korea together with my friends.

Though the permitted ten days stay was lack of, we did not care of it a bit. Anyway we have got the chance of seeing Korea. That was all we wished.

This was how I could visit Korea for the first time in my life.

Our team was named “Bangladeshi Songun politics study delegation”. The head of the delegation was M. Jahangir Khan, chairman of the Bangladeshi Songun Politics Study Group in which I belong to.

He was the director of the Jamia Fukara Juche Institute in, Bangladesh, chief coordinator of the Barisal-related Peasants Union and chief editor of the *Daily Fork*.

The delegation consisted of four members including me.

The ten days in Korea were a period indelible for not only me but also all members of delegation.

Busy as I was, I decided to write what I saw, heard and felt during the visit in order to give a clear view about the DPRK to those strange and put those having an erroneous view about it into rights. I sincerely hope that this book will give the readers a pleasant time and make them a good company.

M. Kaisar
August 2014

Across River Amnok to Pyongyang

It took several days to arrive at the Chinese border town Dandong from Bangladesh situated by the Bay of Bengal southeastward of the Indian peninsula.

Dandong is said to be a local town of China, nearly a century-old symbol of Korea-China friendship, bordered by River Amnok with Sinuiju, a Korea's border town.

The train stopped for a good while for the customs formalities began to roll.

Below the railway bridge dark blue waves of the River Amnok were flowing by in whirls.

After a while we would be in the territory of Korea, known as “land of wonder” and “land of firmness.”

Korea is a country I have never been.

Korea called “Joson” in Korean meaning a “Land of Morning Calm” was neither a large country nor an “economic power”. However, the exceptional history of this country attracted me a great deal.

The attraction came from the amazing change that elevated this small nation to a political, ideological and military power, a nation which, divided into the north and the south, had to go through the hardest trials and difficulties.

To make all these facts known to the world is also my obligation as a lyricist and writer.

This impulse pushed me to visit Korea.

As the train was pulled in the Korean territory across the Chinese border, I could not soothe my excitation.

My heart was still thumping loudly, so that it seemed the others could listen to it.

The train that runs between China and Korea did not seem to be very modern.

Four of us were in a four seated compartment and the group leader was in the next one.

While the group leader Jahangir, Moshiur and I had said our prayers timely, I was staring out through the windows, thinking over the forthcoming days.

The train reached Sinuiju, a border town before the dawn.

As the darkness and fog disappeared, the city clearly showed the appearance.

Apartment houses and public buildings opposite the railway station and motorways ramified to all directions came into view. The streets were crowded with those busy on their way to work.

They were dressed neat and tidy, and active, though not luxurious and gorgeous. Their demeanor and looks were simple and industrious, and at the same time optimistic and live.

Although there was a huge platform outside, we were not allowed to get off, so we were looking through the windows.

The immigration staff knocked our door to check our

luggage. They left us two forms to record our travel details and took our passports.

Five or six carriages got separated from the train and the rest of them were connected to a China bound train.

In the meantime the sun came up.

As was said that Korea was a country of morning calm, the rays of morning sun rising in the really speckles sky seemed uniquely bright.

It was very cold, but Koreans appeared not so cold.

I soon felt that they were accustomed to their climate. The difference of the climate between our country and Korea had been totally out of mind.

We tried to take breakfast with food which we had ready beforehand.

Piru and Sagor bought the eggs and vegetables-the only two items suitable for us form the food carriage. The mixed vegetables with tomatoes were tasty even without any salt.

Our food was the dry thrashed rice and brown sugar that we had brought with us.

We had meals with that food during the journey. There was food carriage in the train, but it six to seven compartments apart. That's why we had meals with the food we had brought. I had not carried any brown palm sugar, rather brought some sweetmeat known as Sabitri Shandesh that one my admirers (Zakir) had sent for me from Meherpur.

One of our co-travelers Sagor brought some specially ordered brown palm sugar from Jhithka. As long as we were on, this thrashed rice and brown sugar was a useful treat for us.

When the breakfast was finished, the immigration staff returned our passports. As we got back our passport, we were quite relieved. Other than this we were not worried much since we had invitation from the Korean government.

The train was moving through the Korean territory. I was staring at the green landscape.

The field has now only the display of green vegetation.

Paddy is produced in plenty there.

Now they apply two-crop farming, so the green vegetation in view is the first crop. In the feature they will plant barley or wheat as a second crop.

Head of our group Jahangir said that during the last Korean war the US aircraft bombed this railway heavily to destroy it because this Pyongyang-Sinuiju line was a main railway line and heavier in traffic than other lines linking Korea to China.

The US aircraft tried to destroy this key line to check the transport of logistic material and even the traffic.

Both sides of the railway and paddies were porous with craters not only immediately after the armistice, but also long afterwards.

The Korean people turned them all into the present

extensive paddies and fields rare to be seen and laid large webs of irrigations to supply plenty of water in farming. The scene was so wondrous that I could not take off my gaze from the window. During the whole journey I enjoyed the views of the farmland.

I thought that the lush paddies grown in those boundless fields would make a wonderful scene.

The villages were all snug and cultural.

They were at the foot of low hills and vast fields outstretching in front of them….

All the fields were planned and homesteads neat and tidy. The landscape was beautiful as a picture.

Kind staffs of the Korean embassy in Dhaka said that General Kim Jong Il of Korea, though busy leading the Songun revolution, initiated a grand plan for changing the land as befitting to Socialist Korea and guided the work energetically.

It took only a few years to shake off the age-old backwardness and change its appearance out of recognition.

Planned clustered villages have been developed without wasting agricultural land. There are plenty of hills and highlands, at the foot of which the clustered villages have been developed, and thus the plain land has been saved for cultivation.

The government buys their harvest in high price. The white and blue color workers get food rationing in cheep

price.

The Government takes care of the people's basic needs—food, clothing, accommodation and medi-care and education, and people do not have to worry about those basics.

The Koreans I met, young and old (though not many), were all intelligent and moral.

In Korea the literacy rate is hundred percent, rare in the world.

The train was running fast.

We met in our compartment one Mr. Ho, a computer engineer from Korea who has business in China.

Mr. Ho was married and had a son. His wife was a journalist in print media.

I could read in his eyes and words the fatherly love of his son.

My loving wife and two sons Neus and Nebeer came across my mind vividly.

We asked Mr. Ho many things to relieve the weariness of the journey. I also asked him many questions, all about Korea.

Mr. Ho who had got good command of English regretted his little scope for using English as all his business associates were Chinese with little knowledge of English.

Mr. Ho mentioned that he used to visit his parents who lived in Korea on the occasion of April 15.

The Korean people celebrate April 15 as the Day of the Sun, because it is the birthday of their permanent great leader President Kim Il Sung, their greatest national holiday.

He was the eldest son and had got two sisters who lived separately with their own families.

He also asked us many things. We discussed different issues including our culture and traditions. Mr. Ho seemed to be interested in knowing more about our country and people.

He said in simple words about what were happening in Korea then.

At that time the Korean people were all out from the New Years Day in response to the joint article of 2009 *"Let us make this year a year of new revolutionary upswing with a loud bugle call of all-out advance!"*(In Korea after the death of President Kim Il Sung a joint article would be published on every New Years Day, which was equivalent to the New Year Address of leader Kim Jong Il.)

On December the 24th, 2008 leader Kim Jong Il paid a visit to a steel plant well-known in Korea. Appreciating highly the successes made by the working class in production, he inspired them to a new upswing "Beacon of Kangson".

The workers and technicians there succeeded in introducing a new steel-making method by an ultra-high voltage electric furnace to open a solid steel production

prospect.

A man of poor knowledge about the technique, I thought plainly that the method was very innovative and productive.

Leader Kim Jong Il, he said, continued his inspection to the KPA units and on-the-spot guidance to the various fields of the national economy in spite of rain or shine or severe winter cold or day and night.

Mr. Ho emphasized that his energetic activities were a driving force which inspired the army and people strongly and propelling them to a new miracle and innovation.

The situation of the Korean peninsula also attracted our attention. In early March that year the US and south Korean forces staged frantic joint war games Key Resolve and Foal Eagle.

The Korean peninsula was the hottest spot as ever.

At that time leader Kim Jong Il, he said, to have given on-the-spot guidance to not only factories, enterprises, building sites, a newly-built swimming pool of a university and other fields of national economy, but also a work of creating an opera.

His stories made me fully read the great political and military potential power of Korea and his iron-will, courage and calm and composed attitude.

By the electronic clock we were expecting to arrive at Pyongyang in another 30-35 minutes. My heart again began to thump.

After a while, the glittering nightly appearance of Pyongyang emerged gradually. Various buildings and thick foliage lit by the evening glow struck an inspiration into my mind.

Grand and beautiful
Wrapped in golden glow
Pyongyang displays in full
Its graceful first show

Pyongyang is the capital city of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

It is the heart and brain of the Korean revolution. It is not only the source of all the policies, courage and brevity, but also miracles and important political decisions.

In particular, here in Pyongyang great President Kim Il Sung much admired by the world progressives lay in state and great General Kim Jong Il, a rare brilliant commander, was exercising the unique Songun politics. (Then General Kim Jong Il had been alive, but he suddenly passed away in December 2011, in the train on his tour for the on-the-spot guidance.)

In a word Pyongyang became a sacred place of the followers of the Juche idea and progressive people.

The nearer to Pyongyang, the more swell I felt in my heart.

We made our luggage tidy and handy.

First Day in Pyongyang

April 12, 2009, at long last the train pulled in the Pyongyang Railway Station, the terminal of our destination. It was about 20 in Korean time.

We got off the train. We were moved by unexpected warm and kind welcome and hospitality of many people.

We met our escorts Mr. Pak and Mr. Wang on the platform.

We met again the Cambodian team, who came to join President Kim Il Sung's birthday celebration for a photo session on the platform.

It was Sunday-Government holiday-and there were thin traffics on the roads.

Within three to five minutes we reached at the Koryo Hotel. The hotel was named after Koryo, the first unified state of Korea.

This tells the strong spirit of national sovereignty and intention of reunification of the Koreans.

We were received with flowers at the hotel.

They allotted Room No. 31 on the 31st floor of the hotel for me and Sagor.

Mr. Pak, one of our guides, handed an itinerary for the next ten days' official tour in Korea, and left the room requesting us to be present at the lobby at 9 o'clock next morning.

Saying good-by he left an impressive charming smile.

I accepted it gratefully as meaning to take a good rest relieving the fatigue of the journey

We took showers and went down to level three for dinner.

Here we could know better about the hotel.

It was 45-storey twin block hotel, 140 m high with a sleeping accommodation for a thousand people and a total floor space of more than 84,000 ㎡.

It was completed in August 1985.There were a corridor bridging linking the two blocks on the upper part. It had a revolving floor with bars on the top of it and various service and convenience facilities in downstairs.

For our dinner we went to the right wing of the third floor. It was a huge hall.

Two beautiful young Korean girls received us at the entrance, and gave us hot towels to refresh ourselves.

The national flags of the participating delegates were on the tables. Table No.7 was reserved for us.

The waiter came with a menu. The menu included food from different countries including ours.

The two waitresses, who came to take our order, hardly understood English.

We managed to order our food for that night by showing the pictures on the menu.

This was my first meal in a socialist country.

On the table juice and beer had been served along with plain drinking water.

We chatted a lot over the meal, mostly on the first impressions in Korea.

Sometimes the waitress came to check if we needed anything.

Tables around us were almost empty-only one guest was taking some sips of beer, and my companions were competing in their beer-intake. They took ten bottles of beer in the first round and another four in the second round and got fully drunk. They approved that the relish of beer was nicer in Korea where cuisine developed.

Being tired of long journey, we all went asleep quickly.

I felt calm either from my arrival of the destination of the journey or the hospitable reception of the Korean friends.

I had a deep sleep and got up at seven o'clock in the morning as the alarm clock went off.

Sagor was still asleep, and once I finished my shower I woke him up. I knocked at the next room where Piru and Moshir were sleeping. After several rings, Moshir opened the door.

I reminded to get ready quickly for breakfast as well as for our presence in the hotel lobby at 9 am.

Anyhow I was an elder next to the group leader Jahangir Khan.

We proceeded for breakfast and asked Piru and Moshir to follow soon.

In the morning it was a different pair of waitress.

The young waitresses were tall and polite.

With a sweet smile they handed hot towels to refresh ourselves.

The menu was quite rich-bread, cheese, yogurt, salad and fruits. Beer was also served.

The group leader ordered juice for all.

There was some laughter recollecting their drunken condition last night.

Beer is cheap in Korea-even cheaper than drinking water. In Korea a litre of beer costs only one *won* (Korean currency). I do not know what it tasted like.

Earlier I used to drink a lot, but I stopped four years ago from diabetes.

While we were still having our breakfast, an interpreter reminded us of our meeting in the lobby at 9.00 am.

Our interpreter Mr. Wang, though young, was fluent in English and polite.

We were taken to the third floor of the hotel.

When we took our designated seats around a huge oval-shaped table for an academic forum on the immortal Juche idea on the first day, there were two Korean speakers-one of them was a female professor. Both the professors were specialists in the Juche idea and international affairs.

Though it was called an academic forum, it was as good as a lecture for us who learned a little of the Juche idea. While the male professor was tall, slim and had fair complexion, the female professor had an eye-catching

look. They knew English well.

Mr. Wang translated them for us. It was a long session. There were a few short breaks to sip some water outside the hall. We had a photo session during the break. Piru was out to smoke. He cannot do without cigarettes. It took much time for the session.

After session we came out of the meeting room and entered a bar, where we met two professors, and we felt an urge to entertain them. Hospitality is ingrained in our culture. As we offered them to treat, they agreed to drink beer. Our group leader was not there, so we the eight--four visitors, two professors and two interpreters--sat around a small table. Mr. Pak called a barmaid and ordered beer and caju (cashew). While a drinking competition was going on there I was an odd man on the table. I ordered for orange juice.

The drinking competition made me worried. “How much the bill would come?” I reckoned. At one point the competition had to be stopped, and I asked for the bill. As the beautiful waitress was figuring out the bill on a calculator, I got panicked. I was relieved when the bill for 25 bottles of beer came to Euro 11. We paid the bill jointly. After some chatting we went over to the window of the revolving floor that commands the whole view of the city going round slowly.

Pyongyang seemed not so large, but very modern city. Down below were high risers and skyscrapers, modern

public buildings and structures planned in fine order, parks and recreation grounds here and there.

The paved roads lined with budding trees and flowering plants with much traffic and people taking a walk.

I heard that Pyongyang was a city in a park, so it was.

The female professor told me. “Our people built Pyongyang from ashes into a modern city. Now Pyongyang is in a heyday.

Our talk went to contrasting the present appearance of Pyongyang with the old one.

Many are proud of their palmy days of their country or capital city. But, most of the cities were those inherited or went through additions and modernization.

Some were damaged in wars and destruction of invaders, but none was as terribly destroyed down to ashes as Pyongyang had been.

The US dropped a countless number of bombs on Pyongyang and many other towns and villages to reduce them to ruins, and then it bragged that it would take over a hundred of years to rebuild Pyongyang as it had been.

However, Korean people did their all to build and create the city, tightening their belt to bring about such a heyday.

As the professors referred to some time ago in the session, the credit of this miraculous success goes to the energetic leadership of President Kim Il Sung who led wisely the rehabilitation and reconstruction for the prosperity of Korea and wellbeing of the people.

It also owes to the great trouble and unflagging efforts of the respected leader Kim Jong Il to turn the city into a blessed land beautiful and good to live in.

Now I began to understand Korea to some extent.

Prominent Art Creation Centre

After taking some rest we went for lunch. The group leader was already there—waiting for us. Since the menu of the lunch was suggested the previous night, the food arrived instantly. After finishing lunch with a lot of humor and laughter, we returned to our rooms for sometime before reporting at the lobby for a next visit.

Korea has four seasons, summer, autumn, winter and spring, different from our country characteristic of tropical monsoons. Seasons in Korea are divided clearly and every season has its own feature.

Korea not only has a beautiful sceneries, but also pleasing seasons.

It was raining outside. Spring rain is still cold. Accustomed to hot weather, we felt very cold in this spring weather. Visitors from other countries had brought warm clothes, but we had not. We had a coat with us, but it was not enough for Korean spring weather even.

With due consideration Mr. Pak brought minibus that had air-conditioning. They were so delicate. After a while we felt rather comfortable. Cars, buses and trucks were plying for on the streets smoothly. This was a different scene from our country crowded with tricycles. The Koreans in general are said to feel comfortable, living in the capital city because the capital city Pyongyang did not have any traffic jam or accidents and the pollution of air

was quite low.

At the crossroad stood a female traffic police blue-uniformed and in long boots directing the cars. It was a rare scene.

They were pretty and slender. They acted like robots moving on a program. I heard from the predecessors who had already been to Korea that in Korea you could see dolls. They were right.

I hurriedly took a picture of her.

Certainly Pyongyang was quite different in the mode of environment from other metropolises.

When the car stopped, the officials of the studio with umbrellas welcomed us and ushered in. It was still raining.

The studio was basically an art gallery. All works of famous Korean artists showing their marked talent and high artistic level were on display on the walls or stands. All of them were eye-catching. All works were varied in styles, types and genres, which included large portraits on huge canvases, Korean paintings, oil paintings, mosaics, chiaroscuros, sketches, sculptures, embroideries and handicraft. We viewed the art works on different floors and were captivated. Korea was far advanced in any respect—in industry, architecture, and cultural refinement and in art too. There were art works with marble powder as well. With varieties of art works the studio was a well resourced art gallery.

In our country *Rashid Choudhuri*'s embroideries were

famous. I was also one of admirers of his works—his artistic talent, ingenuity and delicacy.

Indeed, Korea had a weight and potential power in the creation of arts.

The fine arts are one of major components in the culture of a nation, so you can tell through the development of fine arts how much the people are civilized.

Round the world there are many masterpieces of fine arts, many distinguished galleries and exhibitions with long tradition and excellence.

I found such a gallery or museum and works of fine arts, graceful, perfect in artistic depth of the themes, exquisiteness and representation and great in number in the Mansudae Art Studio as well.

An official of the studio explained in simple words about how the Korean art as well as the studio developed under the wise leadership of great leader Kim Jong Il.

In Korea there was an unprecedented upswing in paintings, sculptures, embroideries, handicraft and all other fields of fine arts under the wise leadership of great leader Kim Jong Il since 1970s on.

Included among them was the grand mural painting “Morning on East Sea”. The depiction was so vivid and delicate that birds, it was said, flew in flocks. They say that just as the same is the case with every other masterpiece, the success of this piece was also owed to the unusual idea and specific guidance of great leader Kim Jong Il.

We learned that great leader Kim Jong Il was well versed in any field and unusually talented.

Monument to Party Founding

From the studio we came to the Party Founding Tower, an architectural icon symbolizing the annals of the Workers' Party of Korea and the import of its emblem. The tower should not be missed by any foreigners.

The majestic figure of the tower brought many thoughts in my mind.

When the monuments and towers, symbols of the revolution were destroyed in the 1990s' serious political earthquake in the East European socialist countries, it stood firm showing the courage and fortitude and invincibility of the Workers' Party of Korea. As we turned around the tower, we were spell-bound and forgot the shivering chill.

Being so impressive, I would introduce the tower in more detail.

The tower was unveiled on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the WPK on October 10, 1995. It stands on a 250,000 ㎡ building area. It is composed of 50 m high body in the shape of a hammer, sickle and brush held by a worker, farmer and intellectual, components of the WPK, with a relief of a slogan “Long live the Workers' Party of Korea, organizer and leader of all victories of the Korean people!” (Inner diameter 42 m, outer diameter 50 m), base

(diameter 70 m) symbolizing the root of the WPK "DIU" (initials of the "Down-with-Imperialism Union" formed by President Kim Il Sung in 1926); three relieves showing its glorious path and dignity. The tower was seen against the apartment houses and faced with a wide foreground for general explanation and a fountain park liberally stretching to the bank of River Taedong.

The Party Founding Tower with the symbol of a hammer, sickle and brush set vertically and girded by a round band demonstrated the character of the WPK as a new-type party of the independence era, a Juche-oriented mass Party composed of workers, farmers and intellectuals and the great exploits he made by engaging in a protracted and energetic struggle to set a model of the world significance and hewing a new way of building a revolutionary party.

Its artistic feature was brought into more relief by the sculptures and calligraphy.

There are three grand relieves (4.1 m high, 28 m long on one side) showing the historical root and might of the single-hearted unity of the WPK and the struggle of the Party and people for the independence of mankind.

The vigorous representation of the workers, farmers and intellectuals who defended the Party and revolution defying the death was quite impressive.

The relieves convinced me the truth that the WPK was the headquarters of the Korean revolution united single-

heartedly and their firm conviction and determination that the posterity would hold fast to the red banner of the revolution rallied firmly behind respected leader Kim Jong Il just as the first generation of the revolution had done rallied firmly behind great leader President Kim Il Sung. The slogan in the round belt “Long live the WPK, organizer and leader of all victories!” and the letters “Invincible” standing on the top of the apartment houses at the backdrop of the tower made clear its character and stressed that victory and glory are in store for the WPK united single-heartedly behind great leader Kim Jong Il.

It was also a Korean-style monument unique in form created to include a comprehensive and profound theme and idea. The vertical structure girded by round band to make a body defined clearly the theme to provide with identity and perfection in representation.

I thoughtfully looked across the river. On a low hill over there stood the statue of great President Kim Il Sung. It was built right opposite the statue. I learned intuitively the choice of its location was also meant to emphasize that the WPK would go down in history with his august name.

All of us said that it elevated the political significance of the center of the capital city.

The curator told us that there was no emblem with a brush together with a hammer and sickle in the world. She was right. I myself have never seen such a mark that included a brush to symbolize intellectuals in addition to a

hammer and sickle. As a matter of fact, till then I had no idea about why the WPK was so powerful and invincible.

After return home I read a newspaper of a country which wrote under the title of “Mother Party”:

“The Korean people call the WPK a mother party. It is a sign of their respect and trust to the WPK which cares them after like mother. The WPK is responsible for their destiny and takes a good care of them as mother does her children.

While reading this article, I reminded of the words “mother party” frequently referred to in the explanation of the curator.

This phrase was a synonym for the WPK every Korean used to call it.

In fact, all the Koreans we met, young and old, referred it affectionately to “mother party” with due pride.

Leader Kim Jong Il paid the greatest attention that the further the leadership authority grows and the trust and expectation of the people to it increases, the more thoroughly it discharges the mission and duty as a mother party.

He always said to the Party officials and led them to do as he said: Our Party is a mother party. Accordingly, you have to meet them with a warm heart and motherly love and devote your all in their interests. That should be the principal manner of their work.

This meant that they had to get acquainted with what

were their wishes and sorrow and what were their inconveniences in life and dedicate their all to make them come true with motherly affection. No party in the world works like the WPK does.

Leader Kim Jong Il not only trained the party officials to have such an attitude and viewpoint, but also personally showed many good examples.

Here is one example among those many examples.

One year an important project of building a plant with a high economic value was put on the agenda.

The officials concerned planned to build it up a river. They had good reason to count on a more advantageous natural and geographical condition.

Briefed on the project, he was deep in thought for long. That day he lay awake all through the night thinking about the choice of the building site.

Early next morning he inquired of an official about the danger of pollution to the residential quarters down the stream in case it would be built up the waters. Then he sized up all round before he came to a conclusion. After all, he turned it down.

To sum up his conclusion, the most important of all the principles in selecting a plot is to give priority to the impact on the wellbeing of the people over the conditions of raw material supply and transportation. We cannot allow any work harmful for the people, however profitable it may be.

He said no to the project because it would cause harm

to the people's living. In case the plant is built up the river, chemicals will pollute the river affecting people's health.

After all, his decisive position of giving precedence to the living condition of the people over the millions of profits persuaded the officials to move the plot to another area that can prevent the pollution at issue.

People would liken what is affectionate and dear to mother: motherland, mother river, mother earth, mother love and son …. I also put many words of respect and eulogy on mother in my poems and lyrics.

However, I found no other people calling the Party mother than the Korean people doing.

I felt that no force on earth can break the tie between the people and WPK in Korea

Still I hear from the Korean media the paeans on the people's mother party—the Workers' Party of Korea.

Today the Korean people are expressing the admiration and reliance to the WPK singing the “Voice of Mother” in their vigorous march forward to a thriving nation.

Lovely voice of mother,
Oh always it's dear whenever I hear.
Near or far, oh dear,
I love our Party's voice.
Though mother's voice rings in a family,
The Party's voice echoes across the country.
Ever and ever present in my mind,

I will follow it, oh dear!

The melody of this ardent song echoing over the party flags marked with the hammer, sickle and brush led me to a deep thought.

In the past some communist and workers' parties in the East European countries lorded it over the people in an outmoded methods and style of work such as the arrogation of administrative affaires and bureaucracy. But the WPK was quite different. It took care of all the working people like kith and kin and their destiny upon itself and defended it to the last!

I still keep in my memory the days of visiting the Party Founding Memorial Tower.

April Spring Friendship Art Festival

Then we moved to the Pyongyang International House of Culture where symbolic representations of Korean industry, art and culture were on display. Everything was recorded in book, video, or CD form and was available for public sale. I bought few items of representative type of souvenirs.

After the gallery tour we came to a fast food shop nearby. People were busy in drinking tea and coffee to warm them up. A cup of coffee cost two dollars.

We refreshed ourselves in the warm atmosphere of the shop for sometime and then left for the last program of the day-a cultural show at the Pyongyang Grand Theatre.

The theatre, cozy and modern, was packed with people.

The drop screen was still drawn, and a banner with an inscription "26th April Spring Friendship Art Festival" was visible on the drop screen.

Mr. Pak said that at the time the festival was now going on.

This festival opened on the 11th two days before our arrival and now in progress in many theatres.

This art festival was held in balmy April in Pyongyang to admire President Kim Il Sung and was participated by important art companies, reputed prize-winners and veteran artistes.

It started in 1970s. The size and level of the performances were very high.

The artistes from Bangladesh took part in the festival several times to enliven the festival.

The house gave the performers warm applause.

The programs included the Korean songs and foreign songs and dances praising and admiring great President Kim Il Sung.

Being exotic and noted for their virtuosity, all the performances were highly acclaimed by the audience. Some of them were in a way similar with *My Golden Bengal* by Rabindranad Tagor.

I found some similarity with the patriotic songs composed by our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. There was some commonality with our folk lore.

The Koreans display such performance everyday, whereas we do occasionally-such as on 26th March (our Independence Day), 16th December (The Victory Day).

Had we been able to follow the Korean way, we could have felt more proud as a nation-as a country. We could not realize how the two-hour program came to an end.

The programs seemed too influential and spell-bounding. I could not understand their language, but that did not stop me from understanding the theme and emotion that go with it.

One thought lit up in my mind visiting the Party Founding Memorial Tower, Mansudae Art Studio and

seeing art theatre and the performance of the festival. It was that though President Kim Il Sung's heart stopped beating, he still lives in the heart of the faithful Korean people and world progressive people and Korea in the Orient true to his words is going ahead with vigor under the leadership of great leader Kim Jong Il.

Certainly Korea was a unique country quite different from those I have ever been to.

In the word *unique* I include the exceptional politics, rapid development of the economy and culture and various other issues.

In Festival Venue of Beautiful Immortal Flowers

It was the second day in Korea.

It was 14th April on the eve of the birthday of President Kim Il Sung.

It was a sunny morning, warmer than the rainy and cold weather of the previous day.

We also felt refreshing.

After a courtesy call to the officials of the Secretariat of the KASS, known as the Korean Association of Social Scientists, at 9.00 am we went to the Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia Exhibition Hall.

It was not a common flower exhibition hall in other countries.

It was an opening day of the 11th Kimilsungia festival. We too were invited there.

The venue was literally a sea of Kimilsungia and other beautiful and fragrant rare flowers, 20,000 blossoms in all, grown and presented by the KPA units, ministries, national institutions, working peoples organizations, scientific, educational, cultural and health organizations, mass media, factories and individual army men, youth and students, overseas Koreans, foreign missions in Pyongyang, missions of international organizations, foreign friendship organizations with the DPRK and Chinese residing in Korea.

The stands in the gallery were decorated artistically with the letters “Immortality” and “Thriving Nation” shaped with Kimilsungia and other beautiful and colorful flowers. We were intoxicated to the full with the beautiful flowers.

At first I thought they were all fake flowers, but when I touched them I felt the difference. The interpreter, who understood our curiosity and doubt, came close to us and reaffirmed that they were all fresh flowers.

We visited all around the gallery of flowers, and made some efforts to know the names and history of some unknown flowers. It was hard to believe that some of the flowers grew on rocks only.

We stopped at the stand prepared with sincerity by the embassy staff of the Republic of Indonesia.

The curator explained how the Kimilsungia came into being:

Kimilsungia belongs to an orchid family.

It was when President Kim Il Sung was visiting Indonesia known as a tropical band of beads in order to participate in the event to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference in April 1965.

One day President Sukarno, admired long at the remarkable ideas and theories, personality and high morality of President Kim Il Sung, led him to the Bogor Botanical Garden.

Showing the garden he stopped at a peculiar sweet-smelling flower in full bloom and expressed his sincere

intention that he would name the flower after His Excellency Kim Il Sung.

President Kim Il Sung declined in a humble way that he had done nothing worthy of calling the flower with his name.

However, President Sukarno would not back down.

'No, Your Excellency has already done great things for the mankind enough to be loaded with honors."

Repeating these words President Sukarno saw to call the flower with the name of President Kim Il Sung, saying that this decision was not only his own, but also the wish of all the Indonesian and world progressive peoples.

This was how the immortal flower Kimilsungia was born.

A great man is recommended in the first place in the hearts of the people.》

I was deep in thought looking up to the grand portrait of President Kim Il Sung on the front wall of the ground hall.

President Sukarno had a very high sense of honor and a great influence in the sphere of world politics and was one of the initiators of the Non-aligned Movement.

His respect and admiration to President Kim Il Sung was so ardent that he decided to name the most beautiful flower after President Kim Il Sung.

There are many proves in the world about flowers which exert influence upon the person.

One proverb says, 'Someone who does not love

flowers can kill someone.' Another says, 'If you have only one paisa(cent) you buy food, but if you have two paisa (two cents)you better buy food with one paisa and some flowers with the other'.

I was familiar with these sayings, but I could realize the immense appeal that flowers could make on people only when I saw the huge collection of flowers in Korea.

The point is, the beautiful flower was called after the name of a great man President Kim Il Sung.

History had seen no great man worthy of naming a flower after him.

However, people of the world today named a flower after him to express their respect and admiration.

So great was the exploits he made for the Korean and the world revolution.

Above all, President Kim Il Sung was a brilliant commander who dealt serious defeats to two imperialisms, Japan and the US, in the present age.

He defeated in 1940s Japanese imperialists that counted among world powers to achieve the liberation of the country, and in 1950s smashed the imperialist allied forces headed by the US, a provoker of the Korean war, to put the US on a decline for the first time in its history, only two years after the government was set up and army founded.

The US was boasting of the “strongest” in the world, which was ever-victorious in many wars till the Korean

war.

But, in the Korean war beaten hollow, it had to drink the cup of agony.

Next, President Kim Il Sung was a great leader who had best regard for the people in all the trials and adversities and devoted his all in their interests.

We could learn these facts in the Jonsung Revolutionary Museum.

We stood against the museum for a photograph taken to celebrate sincerely the victory won by the Korean people in the war.

Outside the museum Korean children had flocked to visit the museum. They are exposed to the national history of struggle of their country on a regular basis. For some time, I got lost among the kids, adored them, took photos with them, and then boarded on a bus to return to the hotel.

We See Mrrow of Korea

In the afternoon the same day we went to the Primary School No.4 and then invited to the fireworks gala "Fireworks of Thriving Nation" in the evening.

The gala was one of the grand events held to celebrate the 97th anniversary of the birth of President Kim Il Sung. It was very significant event where great General Kim Jong Il was personally present, accompanied by the high officials of the Korean Party, state and army.

Nowhere on earth can you see such a grand splendid display of fireworks fanning out in a night sky.

Seated in the blocks of tiers on the bank of River Taedong were the working people from all walks of life in Pyongyang city, merited people nationwide, overseas Koreans, staffs of foreign embassies in Pyongyang and diplomatic representatives. The crowds of seers were carried away by the excitement.

As soon as the display was declared open, the solemn band musics "Song of General Kim Il Sung" and "Long, long live Generalissimo Kim Il Sung" rolled over the dark night sky and a spark was sent up to kindle the torch of the Tower of the Juche Idea

With booming of cannons many-colored shower of fire poured down forming myriads of shapes.

All of a sudden, the sky over the River Taedong unrolled a mysterious scene of fire art.

Innumerable sparks of fire were thrown high up in the air, then coming down or again soaring up, drew various trajectories and emitted bright light, doing various tricks.

The clear and flowery fireworks were all reflected on the flowing river to add to the splendor.

For the first time I found the beauty of fire, a synonym of all the misfortunes.

Mr. Pak told us that the beautiful fireworks symbolized the morrow of his country and people and the bright future of his nation was sure to come.

I was wrapped with excitement all throughout the display as if transported by a magic force into an impersonal state.

I have never seen such a display. The same was all around me. This was the fireworks gala “Fireworks of Thriving Nation”, an event prepared to celebrate the Korea's Day of the Sun and making all those present feel a stir in their heart with wonder, delight, joy and hope.

Back in the hotel the scene of the display persisted in my mind and I could not easily quiet the excitement.

After a while I turned on the TV. It was showing the fireworks display.

Seeing the TV I was astonished that great leader Kim Jong Il, supreme leader of the Korean people, was present on the platform with a full smile to see the display accompanied by leading officials of the Korean Party, state and army.

Looking at him, I was overcome with a feeling of

sublimity.

How much I missed to see him, though far off!

If I had only known he was there!

I let go a chance of lifetime.

I could hardly bear the painful sense of loss. Watching his image and blinking light of fireworks I had a firm belief that though President Kim Il Sung passed away, his revolutionary cause is solidly succeeded by great leader Kim Jong Il. Leader Kim Jong Il is just the same with President Kim Il Sung.

President Kim Il Sung lives in the ideology, leadership and personality of leader Kim Jong Il.

When I shut my eyes quietly I felt an inspiration flash upon my mind.

Eternal Image of the Sun

It was the morning of April 15. The sun was glowing with the difference of the day.

Four fifteen meaning the fifteenth of April is the best red letter day for the Koreans. Their respected President Kim Il Sung was born on the day.

The whole city of Pyongyang was decorated with posters and banners with '4.15' written on it.

“Celebration April 15”, “Father of People” and “Iron-willed Brilliant Commander” and other decoration boards were hung on office buildings, shops and street lamp posts.

I opened the windows of my hotel room to see the city astir with the festive mood.

The morning air was filled with beautiful recitations from the patriotic verses. Some of the voices had similarity with the tones of famous Bangladeshi reciters like Proggay Laboni and Shimul Mustafa.

The recitals in the air reminded me many other vocal artistes from home-Bhashwar Baneerjee, Asaduzzaman Noor, Poet Kazi Abu Jafar Siddique, Rupa Chakravarty, Rabi Shankar Maitry, Ahkamullah, Shafi Kamal as well as some others who already had taken eternal leave from us-Gholam Mustafa, Naren Biswas.

Some time later we went to the Kumsusan Memorial Palace (now renamed as Kumsusan Palace of the Sun),

the most sacred place of the Korean and world people.

We took our best outfit to see the great man admired by the world people.

We boarded on the bus which took us to the parking lot of the memorial palace.

The silence of the atmosphere, the looks of the people and their manners made us feel deferential. There was pin-drop silence. After going through some processes and procedures high pressure air was blown towards us to clean any dust we were carrying. The escalators took us slowly to the interior of the palace. We entered a huge hall with high ceiling and marble walls, where we paid homage to the grand statue of President Kim Il Sung with high respects.

It took only a few seconds that we had bowed to pay our respects, but the moments recalled us many things.

How great were his exploits for the Korean and the world revolution? So how many Korean and world people had already paid their homage to him in this place? Am I not the last man as of today who pay my regards? Why couldn't I do this earlier? If only I met him in his lifetime what could I say to him?

This earnest thought grew further when I stood before the glasshouse where President Kim Il Sung lay in state.

The queue that comes to see him was endless. All of them were in tears after respectfully bowing to him.

He was laid dressed in western clothes and necktie

covered with a red flag as if taking a nap.

His grey hair, reminder of his lifetime hardships and sufferings, stung my heart.

He seemed to receive our bow with a bright face.

“The most respectful and admirable President Kim Il Sung, pray lie in peace! Your cause is faithfully succeeded by great leader Kim Jong Il. A Bangladeshi Kaisar has the honor to pay homage to you! You will be remembered for all ages!”

We were taken to another room where all the awards he had received were on display.

In the next room there was a specially made railway carriage, which President Kim Il Sung had used for traveling across the country and for foreign tours. In the carriage, there were face-to-face seating arrangements, where the President used to make decisions in consultation with his fellow comrades of the WPK and take measures. The Korean people called the train a “Junta Train” or “Running Office Room”.

The President's car and other personal effects have been kept in other rooms.

I wrote a few verses in Bengali and short remarks in English, and signed my name in English also. Our interpreter instantly translated the verses in Korean language.

We were photographed at the Yard of the Kumsusan Memorial Palace where visitors were free to take photos.

It was a great honor for us to take a photo before the sacred palace.

From there we were taken to the Korean Revolution Museum.

We learned there many things.

On the top of several flights of the white granite stairs there were President Kim Il Sung's grand statue flanked by a great marble flag on each side with group sculptures depicting the heroic struggle of the fighters and people during the anti-Japanese armed struggle and the socialist construction. Right at the back of it stood the Korean Revolution Museum.

We were explained in the rooms about the eventful modern history of Korea integrated in this one museum.

All the stories-about the Songun leadership of President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il on the liberation of the country, the Korean war, socialist construction and so on-were touching.

I was fully aware through the visit to the museum of why the Korean and world progressive people were so earnest in admiring the two leaders.

In the note book kept there, I wrote a 16-line rhyme in Bengali which was instantly translated into Korean language.

In the afternoon we were taken to the President Kim Il Sung's birthplace at Mangyongdae which the Korean people call the sacred place e of the revolution.

Mangyongdae was a beautiful place on the bank of River Taedong about 4 km southwestward from the center of Pyongyang.

It was still raining outside. We joined the Indian and other teams who had already arrived there.

President Kim Il Sung's native house was a plain homestead common everywhere in Korean countryside. We seemed smell earth from the straw-thatched roof, mud walls and strip of level ground under the eaves. Framed family or individual photographs were hung on the mud wall.

That brushwood gate, though small, carried a world of meaning. It was said that he went out of the gate determined to liberate the country in his early age of 14 and came back home through the gate after defeating the Japanese aggressors.

The straw used for roofing looked like thin jute stalk of our country, and seemed to be strong.

A reed mat and old and worn short-legged table in the room told the penury of the family in his childhood.

There was a big-sized wooden box which was similar to the ones we use at home as a kind of secured vault.

The same can be said of the kitchen.

The distorted shapeless pot in a corner of the yard and farming tools were a testifier of misfortune.

The whole environment had some resemblance to Bangladeshi villages.

This was the place where President Kim Il Sung was born.

He liberated the Korean people from the colonial slavery, set up a popular state, safeguarded it firmly and turned the country into a land of happiness because he himself had experienced so much penury and hardship.

Listening to the explanation about his childhood and the patriotic and revolutionary family of Mangyongdae, we carefully saw every piece of the relics.

The visit to the birthplace of the President in Mangyongdae was not a call to a simple homestead, but an unforgettable opportunity that made me know about a great man and respect him.

We took some photographs of the house of Mangyongdae and went to see his mother's homestead.

It was also a simple homestead. The household belongings here were similar to those of the old home of Mangyongdae.

There was a huge bronze statue of Mrs. Kang Ban Sok, Korea's mother, (Mother of President Kim Il Sung) at the foot of which people had laid flowers.

The hut was still preserved as it had been. It was visited by many people.

We returned to the hotel.

The traffic girls skillfully controlled the busy traffic.

When I retired to the hotel, I stood by the window to look down upon the city getting dark.

The windows of the apartment houses and street lamps cleared the darkness and brilliantly illuminated the city.

In many places in the city there was a slogan which particularly attracted my eyes, “Great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung is always with us!”

The slogan persisted in my mind's eye.

Yes. He will always be in the heart of the Korean and world people.

All those historical facts, relics, monuments and what happened there which I witnessed and felt are an eloquent proof of this.

President Kim Il Sung is always in our heart as the sun.

The Development of Agriculture in Korea

For the next morning we were scheduled to attend an academic discussion at the People's Palace of Culture, where cautiously we took seats reserved for us, put on our headphones and listened to the English translation of the lectures that included a long statement of development in power and agricultural sectors in Korea in the recent years.

Power and agriculture are important sectors in any country. There has been tremendous development in those sectors in Korea.

The proof of this success is found in what are happening in Korea.

Electricity never failed for even a second during our ten days' stay in Korea.

The light is bright on the apartment houses and office buildings and streets were brilliant by the beautiful light from lamps.

The buzzing sound from the factories continued.

The Koreans consume huge amount of electricity both in winter and summer. They have given highest priority to electricity sector.

Although I have not visited any other socialist countries and so cannot draw any comparison with Korea, I would still say that the Koreans have ensured highest level of

utilization of farming land.

Unlike our country and many other countries where cultivable land is being reduced due to expansion of new township, the Koreans have earmarked their land for agriculture.

They also are increasing cultivable land through land rezonement and tideland reclamation. So it is evident that agricultural production grows.

During my twenty eight-hour long train journey from Chinese border to Pyongyang, I noticed the excellent management of land resources. The Korean villages use oxen too in agricultural production

Korea's terrain is 80% mountainous not so suitable for agricultural farming.

However, Koreans were industrious enough to make high yield in a limited cultivable land.

In particular, Korea developed irrigation to cover the paddy and dry fields with a network of canals.

Very impressive in Korea was the natural flow watercourse which guarantees the stability of the agricultural production without using power.

A speaker said that this watercourse stretched as long as 1 200 km to put many hectare of agricultural land under irrigation and conserve a lot of KW of electricity.

I was trying to compare what was being said in the academic papers about the revolutionary changes and the reality around me, and I found the information in the

papers authentic.

Contrary to what happens in our academic seminars where people take long break for tea and refreshments and engage themselves in personal pleasantries, I did not see any such wasteful break in that Korean program.

Time is valuable for man!

Anybody will answer it is the time when he is asked what is the longest in the world, yet he feels it wanting most keenly in his lifetime.

Time is gold for a man of literature, mother of truth for a man of philosophy, triumph for a military man, and knowledge for a teacher, life for a man of medicine and money for a businessman.

In Korea there is no waste of time.

There was a party in commemoration of the Day of the Sun.

Present there were many other foreign delegations from the Juche idea study groups.

The deputy president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly was the chief guest. The seventy year old deputy president made a welcome address. He began to speak amid a loud applause:

"Dear Mr. Bishwanath,

Dear delegates from the Juche idea study organizations the world over,

I, on behalf of the DPRK Government, extend a warm welcome to the director of the International Juche Idea

Institute and the delegates of the Juche idea study organizations abroad staying in Korea to celebrate the Day of the Sun.

It is an expression of the infinite respect and admiration to President Kim Il Sung, the author of the Juche idea and its realizes, for you to pay honor to him lying in state in the Kumsusan Memorial Palace on the Day of the Sun, the greatest national holiday of our people."

Then he went on to say that President Kim Il Sung had made great exploits for the cause of the independence of mankind, that the Juche idea was successfully materialized in Korea to bring about great achievements in the revolution and construction and that the ranks of the Juche idea study organizations and the followers were increasing widely worldwide.

After his address everybody chorused cheers for the eternal life of President Kim Il Sung and final victory of Juche idea.

It was a warm and happy moments.

Those present were warm and the followers of the Juche idea were full of willing to strengthen the friendship and cooperation.

At the peak of the party I contacted the protocol officer to seek permission to have a photo session with the chief guests.

He gave a ready consent.

I was introduced as a poet to the chief guest. He

touched my head and wished me success.

The Korean officials, guides, curators and all others seemed my kith and kin.

After party we took some rest and got ready with a few light clothes in a bag for a journey outside Pyongyang.

Before starting at 4:30 pm I went to the phone counter of the hotel to call my family with whom I had no contact for seven days.

The lady operator with whom I had already become familiar during those days, connected me to Dhaka instantly, and talked to my wife who was at the school to pick up my son Nibir.

I felt at home to hear the voices of my loving wife and son.

I told my wife that I might not call them again during the remaining few days' stay in Korea. They did not insist on my calling them. It was 2:00 pm in Bangladesh and 5:00 pm in Korea.

We met a Pakistani visitor named Barkatullah in a room next to ours. Barkatullah had a homestead in Saidpur (Bangladesh), and left Bangladesh in 1973. Tall darkish Barkatullah was able to speak Bangla quite fluently, and recollected his days in Bangladesh, and mentioned that he was a supporter of Students Union (a left leaning students organization), and supported the issue of Bangladesh during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. He shared some aspects of the present culture of Pakistan,

and at one point when he started singing our national anthem (Amar Sonar Bangla Ami Tomai Bhalobashi…) Piru and Moshiur joined us, and we all added to the chorus. We also sang together some film songs that were popular during 1970s.

Although we could not get Barkatullah's personal opinion about the separation of Bangladesh, he was respectful to our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

To prepare ourselves for the afternoon program, we cut short our discussion.

After some time we started our journey to Mt. Myohyang as scheduled.

We gave photo pose as the Korean girls requested us.

When the bus stopped, we got off the bus and strolled around and noticed that the first crop field was being made ready for the second crop.

The Korean farmers were working hard.

Many fishing boats were catching fishes.

The bus left again for the Mt. Myohyang.

At Mt. Myohyang, Korea's Pride

Mt. Myohyang is a noted mountain second to Mt. Kumgang in Korea. It is scenic beauty well-known and full of meaning.

It lies around Mt. Myohyang, North Phyongan Province, about 180 km away from Pyongyang.

We were pleasant, the more so for it was a journey to a noted mountain.

In the bus, there were visitors from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Ukraine, Russia, Japan and Syria. There were also two young Korean hostesses quite smart.

The bus moved along a two-way highway divided by a narrow strip of land at a speed of hundred kilometres per hour. We all stared at the surrounding farmland beginning freshly green.

Some calm shallows flowing through green farmlands passed by the windows of the bus. Lozenges of sun rays were glimmering on the waves of the river.

Someone was also seen fishing with fishing rods.

The idyllic scene of the fields and rivers was like a piece of beautiful picture.

The moments on the river reminded me of the rivers-the Ramnabad of Galachipa and the Shandhay of Sharupkati in Bangladesh. I was recollecting my memories around and across the rivers in Iran, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and India.

The unknown rivers and farmland will remain long in my memory. Anyhow, the rural landscape of Korea left an indelible impression in my mind for its good planning and beauty.

Amidst the jokes and funs, the bus reached our destination-Mt. Myohyang.

Getting off the bus, we were full of wonder when we looked at a huge five-star hotel called Myohyangsan Hotel. It was a conform edifice built for the tourists on a piece of land with high mountain range around with exceptionally beautiful architecture and form that goes well with the shrouded high peaks around.

The golden beam from the setting sun reflected on the mountain created beautiful scenery.

The fashionable entrance hall too captured our fancy. We got on a lift and were shown in to a room on the seventh floor. After taking off our traveling outfit, we looked at the scenic beauty from our room for a while, quite fascinated.

There are many noted scenic beauties round the world. No less was Mt. Myohyang of Korea in charm.

We refreshed ourselves and came down to the dining hall for supper.

The decoration of the hall, the magnanimity of the table and the attending young waitresses provided a grand look to the whole atmosphere.

At the request of the Indian delegates, we dined

together. It was a long dinner with lots of other entertainments. When my tour-mates were competing with beer, I was just pouring myself with cans of juice.

The dinner was followed by music and dance in the lobby of the hotel which turned into a ballroom long into the night and mingling with many people.

Korea was really a country full of songs and cheerful dances.

Next morning people were busy taking photographs before boarding onto the sight-seeing bus. After driving through the mountain passes, the bus stopped at a hilly slope. It was at an altitude of 200 to 250 feet above the sea level. A middle-aged female interpreter came to us to explain about the International Friendship Exhibition House.

It was a six-storied monumental building with 46,000 ㎡ of floor space.

We approached towards the huge door of the building.

The interpreter asked me with a meaningful smile to open the door.

Without understanding the hidden pragmatics of the request, I attempted to open the door, but could not move it at all. More people helped me, but in vain.

The fellow visitors burst into laughter and I became a bit awkward. Mr. Pak, our interpreter, asked me to retreat from the door, and explained that the door weighed (4x2) 8 tons of pure copper which cannot be damaged even by a

very powerful bomb.

We were amazed to see the beautiful curving on the door made with an automatic locking system.

By a flicker of the switch the door was opened slowly. Then a bright light dazzled my eyes.

Various souvenirs were on display by the wall of the expansive hall. Woodcut, sculptures, paintings, gold and silver works… all were rare and valuable. It seemed a collection of the world treasures.

The closer we observe every piece of the souvenir, the more amazed we were at the creativity and talent of man.

Besides, I could read the sincerity of the world leaders and political and social personages and people who admired President Kim Il Sung and arranged those souvenirs with their best wishes.

A part of a room has been allocated for gifts from Bangladesh, and I found a few gifts items given by our former presidents-Ziaur Rahman (He visited Korea in September 1978), H.M Ershad and some other Bangladeshi citizens.

The communist leaders in our country are used to open and hold their umbrella when there is rain in Moscow without a firm conviction, but I was shocked to see that there are no gift items in this museum from those so called hard-core communist leaders of our country.

Our 'scythe and spade' band communist leaders are good at receiving but too miser to give anything.

I was simply amused to see gift from Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, China, Singapore and the Philippines.

The rooms were air conditioned and the light system with sensor allowed it to turn off automatically.

We went round the exhibition long, but the tour was endless.

The interpreter said that it would take at least 18 months to have a glance at all the gift items. Then it will run into an astronomical figure, I thought.

Then we saw the Exhibition House of Gifts to leader Kim Jong Il from overseas.

It was located in a solitary valley amidst mountain all around.

It was mid-April. The sky was specklessly clear. The sound of falling creeks from far away rendered the landscape more poetic.

The curator said that the house contains a collection of more than 57,000 items presented to leader Kim Jong Il from over 170 countries.

It was great. The saying is right that the number of gifts is a proof of admiration and respect of the world people.

I was fully aware that leader Kim Jong Il as well as President Kim Il Sung was also a great master of the Songun politics being given admiration and praise of the people in the independent world.

I learned easily that this exhibition house was a great treasure house of the human civilization.

Other president or head of state would have made all of them their own private possessions.

However, people's leaders President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il saw to preserve all of them as a people's wealth and national asset intact to display.

This fact alone proved that the Korean people are happy to have a popular and benevolent leader.

At the entrance of the hall there was a huge statue of leader Kim Jong Il in standing position, attracting the notice of the visitors.

The illuminated sculpture has been made so perfectly that anybody may make a mistake and take it as live.

While we were taken to other rooms, we found a room with gifts from Bangladeshi leaders-our father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, martyred president Ziaur Rahman, former president H. M. Ershad, Rashed Khan Menon and Mohammad Jahangir and also from some Bangladeshi organizations.

Compared to other countries, the Bangladesh part seemed very little. Had we been aware that we would be allowed to bring presents, we could have brought some gifts for the exhibition.

The stock of gifts to the distinguished great men in the International Friendship Exhibition House was so abundant that the stream of visitors was continued.

We saw many foreigners different in color and language.

The curator said that that day the number of the foreign visitors was rather smaller. This alone tells that there would be a great many foreigners visiting the exhibition.

Indeed, the International Friendship Exhibition House is literally a treasure house symbolizing the mankind's praise of great President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il.

Witnessing this fact we felt more keenly the respect and admiration to leader Kim Jong Il, as well as the respect to President Kim Il Sung always living in the heart of the mankind.

Unforgettable Climbing of Mt. Myohyang

Mt. Myohyang is justifiably proud of not only a sacred place for the treasures presented to the great men, but also a superb scenic beauty.

Thick woods, blue rivers, spectacular waterfalls, or white sand beach along the coast would give people mental relief and emotional response to the beauty of the nature.

But I have not seen such scenery in Mt. Myohyang calling forth so deep emotional sentiments.

We all felt the same.

After visiting the International Friendship Exhibition House we had a talk with an official working in Mt. Myohyang.

An elderly and quite impressive man he was, we soon made friends.

He said to this effect before the chart of climbing course.

You may go a little along this valley and arrive at the Chonsin waterfall. The water of this fall comes over a dizzily high peak to flow down along the rocky wall as if coming down from the heaven as the name implies. And then you go on climbing over a precipice through the foggy sprinkle of this waterfall driven over the woods and then there is a small Buddhist temple called Sangwonam.

There you will have a rest for a while and go on climbing to see a pavilion called Pulyongdae. Climbing down this pavilion you can see a wonderful scene of a chain of peaks. They say the sight is incomparable to any other scenery. …It will take many days to see all the scenic beauties in Mt. Myohyang including the Piro Peak….

He also told us about the benevolence of the peerless great men associated with this mountain.

We were also taken to the Buddhist temple near the exhibition house.

As I have said above, Mt. Myohyang is a vast mountain range with numerous peaks and valleys. By the way, all these peaks and valleys are full of historical relics and remains, temples, pavilions and historic episodes.

We were much moved to know that Korea held fast to the policy of preservation of the national heritage and took good care of the relics created in its five thousands years old history as we have seen in Mt. Myohyang.

To take an example, many temples in the mountains were also bombed by the US aircraft during the Korean war, and the ruins were visible. All of them were reconstructed to the original state after the war, and the temples in Mt. Myohyang belong to them, the curator said.

I have seen the Korean Buddhist temple for the first time.

To see the gable-roofed temple decorated with many-colored patterns inside I fancied that I was hearing the

Buddhist monks sounding wooden blocks from it.

The wood bust of Sakyamoni was preserved in an original state. The outlet of moksha, the main shrine and other inevitable buildings remained as they were.

There was a glass made donation box with very little contribution in it. I put Euro 5 in the box.

We met a few Buddhist monks and took some photos with them.

There were actually Buddhist monks in Korea.

However, when I was in Bangladesh I believed what the anti-DPRK politicians and religionists say that there was no freedom of religion in north Korea and could not find a church or cathedral there.

It was a black lie that there was no freedom of religion in Korea.

They say that there are Christians and Catholics, as well as Buddhists, Jangchung Church and Pongsu Cathedral.

To believe or not is freedom of the Korean citizens.

Koreans believe their leader as their god, their homeland as their heaven.

Swayed by the prejudice against the Korea's policy on religion we the practicing Muslims in the team had to pray stealthily in our hotel rooms.

Our Korea visit served a chance to put right our prejudices as well.

We returned to our hotel and took our lunch.

The lunch was full of magnanimity, with varieties of dishes. My group mates were more attracted to drinks than food. Our team leader and I were taking ice-cream after lunch, but our other fellow mates seemed to be thirsty. We tried to stop them drinking any more. But it was all in vain.

As Mr. Pak reminded us to hasten up and get ready for the return bus to Pyongyang to attend our evening program there, we checked out from the hotel and returned our keys.

After driving at a high speed, the bus stopped beside a farmland. It was a required stoppage for some of us. In the meantime I requested one of the tour mates to take a photograph of mine with the farmland in the background.

The farm village was very beautiful. It seemed like a village in a fiction. The adults were out to the field and children were frolicking with pet dogs.

I reminded of our farm villages.

Finally we reached a huge orchestra centre in Pyongyang where the show was scheduled to start at 5:00 pm. The hall decorated with red banners and flags were full to the brim.

When the drop-screen started rolling up, the audience greeted the performers who were sitting on the stage with clapping. A middle aged conductor of the orchestra appeared on the stage with a stick in his hand. As he moved his stick, several musical instruments-piano,

guitar, and violin- started creating serene melodies, and a pin-drop silence prevailed in the hall.

The beautiful and emotional melodies told the high standard of the Korea's experienced music.

The ninety-minute performance included songs and music representing Korean history and culture.

Though we had different history and culture, we could fully understand the sentiments and idea the orchestra gave us that day.

Certainly Korea was far advanced in the sector of art, too.

At the end of the show, the performers bowed together and the audience cheered and clapped to thank them.

“Country of Education”

It was 18th April. It was raining heavily outside.

What we had noticed during our twelve-day stay was that rain was a common daily feature. Mr. Pak said about it a heavenly blessing on our Korea visit.

Though I had got up earlier, Sagar and others were still asleep.

For our 10 o'clock program, I completed my shower and woke up Sagar.

We took our breakfast. After traveling for sometime in rain, our bus stopped in front of the Kangbansok Middle School No.1. It was a multi-storied building fully computerized.

As the bus approached, the synchronized gates opened automatically.

Not spending too long in the ground floor, we went to level 2, where classes were in progress. Here the given lessons were fully computer-based. We visited the classroom and observed how computer-based teaching was going on. In addition to the internet facility, the shelves were full of books, and students-both male and female-were studying there with rapt attention.

I also noticed an old man was studying with full attention. The Koreans have passion for reading.

The old man kindly gave a pose for a photograph with me.

I felt the advantage of the education system in Korea when I went to the Primary School No.4.

In the classrooms the male students sit on one side of the classroom and the female students on the other. There were 1650 enrolled students in the school. Instruction is given both in Korean and English languages. That was the first time we noticed the coexistence of English and Korean languages.

We met a boy named Song Gun Ryong and were amazed to see the student's command in both English and Korean languages.

We visited several classes. In one class, the students were dissecting frogs and examining them under microscopes and recording data on to the computer nearby. In another class, a female teacher was teaching English. Her high level of English proficiency was quite evident. We were also astounded to see the teachers' dedication.

So all the students, though young, were making good results in languages, mathematics, physical training and other subjects.

We were then taken to the school auditorium to enjoy a twenty-minute long cultural show and it was really very enjoyable. Many aspects of the Korean nation would have remained unknown to us, if we had not visited the school.

In Korea children are studying free of charge from nurseries and kindergartens to primary and secondary

schools.

It was as good as every body learns free of charge and compulsorily to the working age.

Wonderful education system!

I could not but think about the education system in Bangladesh.

We are in a crusade against illiteracy, particularly in primary education.

We began to apply new curricula in 1983 to improve the educational level. The government announced a plan to set up a primary school in a residential area with 2,000 children and 2 ㎢ in area during the third five-year plan.

We give free education in five-year primary schools.

In 1988 the percentage of primary and secondary school attendance was 29 and that of the university attendance 22 and in 1990 the percentage of adult literacy was 35.

We have Dhaka, Chitacong and other national-level universities, 10 in all, and medical, dental and other colleges and nurses' training schools and post-graduate institutions.

The education system includes five-year course in primary stage, another five-year course in secondary stage and two-year course in senior secondary stage and four-year course in tertiary stage (a preparatory course included).

In this situation it is still a long way off for us to apply a

free compulsory education and make all learn to abolish illiteracy.

In fact the education is one of vital matters that decide the existence and future of a nation.

We can hardly think of a social progress, prosperity, dignity and bright future of a nation without education.

Such being the case, we can be sure of the bright future of Korea where the education is on the highest level.

Two years ago I learned through the TV report on the proclamation of the law on a 12-year universal compulsory education adopted in a session of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly.

It was a leap forward from the last unprecedented universal 11-year system. The world is again amazed at the advanced educational system in Korea.

The new universal compulsory education will decisively improve the quality of the education to conform to the demand of the era of the intellectual economy and the world developments to bring up children to more competent personnel possessed of general secondary knowledge, updated fundamental technology and creative power.

It is really the most excellent educational system promising the bright future of Korea going ahead to a socialist civilized nation.

The universal free and compulsory education is one of the actual developments Korea can highly be proud of.

In addition to this institutional mechanism, Korea arranged an all-people study system and conditions.

We were aware of this when we visited the Grand People's Study House.

It was a Korean-style building complex near the above-said Korean Revolution Museum on Mansu Hill.

The Grand People's Study House was a ten-storied building with about several hundreds of rooms including reading rooms and lecture rooms and husing 30 million books. It was literally a comprehensive sanctuary of learning with a total floor space of about 100,000 ㎡.

Each of the reading rooms has got provisions for two hundred readers at a time.

We visited nearly 20 reading rooms using escalators, which have got a rich collection of print materials of political, economic and cultural fields as well as audio-video musicals from home and abroad.

It was a grand palace of learning rare to be seen in its size and stock of books.

There were many books from all over the world, too.

So far I could recollect, there were some historically important books and excerpts from newspapers as well, and some manuscripts were as old as 1,400 years.

Readers were workers, farmers, intellectuals, students, scientists and technicians from all over the country. There they can read and lend books, carry on their studies and attend lectures.

The house also ran short courses of foreign languages.

It was also a venue of frequent international scientific and technological book exhibitions.

We were overwhelmed to see a huge number of people of varying age groups studying in the study house.

It symbolizes the policy of attaching importance to education in Korea.

When I asked about Bangladeshi songs, they regretted for not having any. I am quite confident that Bangladeshi diplomats, cultural attaches in Korea have not missed to visit this cultural museum, but none of them has felt the urge to send some cultural tokens of Bangladesh to this iconic museum.

With us we had a fellow travel mate from Syria. He ordered some Syrian materials which arrived instantly and he became happy and felt pride, but I was again disappointed when not a single Bangladeshi book could be found in that library.

But the museum authority assured me that during my next visit to the museum, I would certainly be able to listen to some of Bangladeshi songs.

Anyhow, I was fortunate to see this rare palace of learning for the people.

This study house is so huge that it is impossible to visit its every corner in a day or two.

After the visit of the study house we recorded our comments in the visitors' book.

Leaving the house, I felt confidently that Korea is truly worthy of being called a “country of education” where all people, young and old, learn.

We were scheduled for a circus show in the afternoon. The circus program reminded me of my childhood when I used to watch Laxman Das circus show in the southern part of Bangladesh and revived a kind of nostalgia.

Circus shows are not infrequent in Dhaka, but I could not make it due to time constraints and other preoccupations.

Tickets cost Euro 20(equivalent to Bangladeshi TK.1800).

The gallery was full with audience. There were some foreigners like us as well.

The show started with musical chorus. We were amazed to see the perfect acrobatic performance and fearful flying high from one end to the other. Some of these events were similar to the shows usually shown in Bangladeshi circus. In one of the events, a tiny girl was twisted and molded in such a way that we started believing that it was a doll, but finally we discovered that it was a live girl. We were too amazed to applaud. Two clowns and jokers made us laugh a lot.

Free medical Care

The next morning April 19, the visiting delegates from different countries met together in a room in the hotel.

There were delegates from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. We exchanged our views about the aims and objectives of KASS (initials of the Korean Association of Social Scientists).

Our team leader, Mr. Jahangir Khan urged for the expansion of KASS program in the subcontinent and explained that the concept of KASS had no conflict with the principles of Islam.

After a long discussion, the KASS president, Mr.Jahangir Khan of Asian region, requested to form a committee to spread the ideology of KASS in Bangladesh.

Somehow, it was a profitable forum. This success may be interpreted to be a step forward in strengthening the friendship and solidarity with Korea and supporting her independent principles and anti-imperialist position.

Though state protocol for us ceased two days earlier than our departure, the Korean government took the responsibility of our room and board expense, so we did not have to worry at all.

We were scheduled for 22nd April morning train for our return, but in the meantime, my eyes got infected and could not see anything.

Mr. Pak worried and took me to the clinic of the hotel.

(The clinic belonged to the Pyongyang Friendship Hospital which deals with only foreigners.)

It was my chronic disease.

Dr. Li Son Bak, seventy, was the head of ENT department.

I was examined in a room on the fourth floor designated for the foreigners. After some thorough check-up, the doctor gave me a prescription and asked me to return to the hospital for further tests.

I felt some worry in his eyes. He was very kind.

I did not have to pay anything for the doctor's consultation and medicine.

When I mentioned about payment, he told me that in Korea the treatment is free and doctors and medicines are always available at the hospitals. He explained me in plain language about the pubic health in Korea.

So I have got the benefit of the free medical care in Korea.

Hospitals had sufficient medicines and the service of the hospital staffs was very good.

I heard there that hospitals and polyclinics made their way even to a remote mountainous corner of the country and the district medical care system guarantees all the vaccination and medical care of the residents within the proper district. All the citizens as well as children are entitled to get free medical treatment.

I was quite astonished to know that in Korea the system

of the free medical care began in January 1953, six decades before, because it was a hard time of the war in Korea against the invasion of the United States called “the strongest”.

In addition, Korea is a sole country without taxes. In March 1974 she abolished the taxation system to improve the livelihood of the people and free them from the fetters of the outmoded social hangovers.

Then, where the funds for the education and public health come from?

Not only I myself but also all the rest of us had the same question.

Mr. Pak, smiling, explained in simple words that it comes from the fund built up in the rapid development of the economy made by the people's creative and devotional efforts.

The Korean people do not seek personal ease or money, but devote themselves to the wellbeing of their society and collectives, their country and people self-sacrificially and conscientiously.

That is incomparably greater than any revenue. Only those who experienced it will understand it.

From the hospital we went to a picnic spot on a mountain.

The bus that had arrived before us could not climb the top and so was parked the below the spot.

Although there were provisions for cooking on the spot,

we had different arrangements. For us food was brought from the hotel, and we enjoyed food with lot of humor and funs.

There was a Russian delegation too sitting near our table.

In the meantime the delegation came to know my identity as a poet and lyricist.

They addressed me as a poet. I could not refuse their request to sing and had to comply with my un-tuned voice.

Among the three Russian delegates there were two writers and a minstrel. The minstrel, who composes verses instantly as he speaks, was very jovial and photography was his hobby. We had lots of funs on the mountain top and enjoyed the beautiful view of the towns below. The lunch packet was quite heavy with food items. The six hours on the mountain top passed with a wink of an eye.

It was time to return to the hotel. The bus started moving continuously along the sloping mountain path. We were watching the farmland below with peasants both male and female busy working in the field.

The bus stopped at a zoo, too. I could see there aquariums with marine animals and vivariums for white tigers, chimpanzees, bears and rare animals from Europe, Asia and Africa. We also viewed a 250 year old bonsai tree.

The curator said that leader Kim Jong Il was giving

great attention and care to the zoo so that it can help the working people upgrade their cultural and emotional level.

There were also a small sports ground for monkeys and stages for the feats and tricks of animals.

But we had no time to spare for their performances, because our group leader was having an interview with a state TV reporter. I myself had already done it.

At the comprehensive bases for training scientific and technical personals

Our program April 20 was a visit to the digital library at the Kim Chaek University of Technology.

The fashionable and large library was a testifier of the training of scientific and technological personnel in Korea being on a high-level, who would lead the campaign for attaining the goal of ultra-modern techniques and reaching the era of intellectual economy true to the words of leader Kim Jong Il **"Eyes to the world with feet on our own land!"**

In spite of international ban and embargo, Korea has grown profusely (in and outside).

They speak frankly that they have enough nuclear technology of their own and they are proud of being a nuclear state.

The US cannot help but admit Korea being a nuclear state.

Before I came to Korea, I heard the Pentagon *"Ad Hoc Inquiry Committee for Examination of Nuclear Arms Management"* published a report admitting Korea as a nuclear state.

The report commented that Korea has got not only nuclear weapons, but also missile systems that can carry

them.

The people of the world were amazed at this and looked upon Korea with a different view.

Then some time later, the spokesman of the Korea Space Technological Committee announced a statement presaging the launch of communication, resources prospecting and weather forecasting satellites of practical use and normalizing their operation.

This news produced conflicting opinions: many progressive nations welcomed but hostile countries went sour.

However, Korea would not be scared at it to renounce her decision.

Korea put spurs to the development of nuclear and space science and technology based on ultra-modern science and technology.

Indeed, it was a revelation of her firm belief and brevity that “dogs bark, but the caravan passes on”.

The time coincides with the frenzied joint war exercises “Key Resolve” and “Foal Eagle” of the US and south Korea targeting the north.

In answer to these developments, the Supreme Command of the Korean People's Army reported “Our armed forces will face it with the righteous war for the reunification, if the war maniacs dare to impose an invasion.”

In the same breath Korea warned the enemy with the

statement of the spokesman of the General Staff of the KPA “The traitor Li Myung Bark and his cronies must be prudent.”

The courage and mettle of Songun Korea did not stop at this.

The ultra-tough measures against the get-tough stance of the hostile forces surprised the world still more.

On April the 3rd a few days before we left home to visit Korea the Supreme Command of the KPA announced an important report “Our revolutionary armed forces will decisively shower a barrage of fire upon those daring to intercept our peaceful satellite.”

I was remembering the phrases of this report on my way of coming to Korea.

“We have already joined the international space treaties and already dispatched on March the 3rd the telegraphic notice concerning the closing of the danger sphere in the air in the foreseeable period of the launch to the civil aviation authorities concerned of the United States, Japan, Russia, China, Switzerland and south Korea.

“At present the countries concerned are admitting our practical moves conforming to the international regulations and conventions and on the way of taking necessary measures. However, only Japan is branding the launch of our peaceful test communication satellite 'Kwangmyongsong-2'as a 'hostile act' and making a great

fuss about it as if a calamity has fallen upon them, finding fault with our advance notice on the closing of the danger sphere in the air. The guided missile destroyers “Kondo”and “Jokai”of the Japanese invading army and “Sejongdaewang”of the south Korean puppet navy have already been deployed in the East Sea of Korea.

“The Japanese reactionaries bereft of all reason proclaimed to “intercept” our satellite as their state policy.

“In this connection, the General Staff declares as follows: 1) In case Japan is indiscrete and dares to “intercept” our satellite the People's Army will give a decisive fire of retaliation without mercy not only to the means of interception already deployed but also important objects. 2) The United States should withdraw its armed forces deployed if it wants to avoid the damage, since it has made clear its own stand concerning our launch of the satellite. 3) The south Korean puppet war maniacs should stop cringing upon their Japanese and US masters and desist from throwing an obstacle to our launching the satellite, the pride of the nation.”

Soon after the announcement of this declaration leader Kim Jong Il went to the satellite tracking station to observe personally the process of launching the artificial satellite “Kwangmyongsong-2”.

The Korean satellite “Kwangmyongsong-2” at last kicked off the earth to thrust itself into the space.

That is, the Korean scientists and technicians

succeeded in putting the satellite “Kwangmyongsong-2” on the orbit by means of the carrier rocket “Unha 2”in accordance with the state space development program.

Back home I heard a shocking news in December 2012 that Korea successfully launched the service earth satellite “Kwangmyongsong-3” No 2.(In April that year Korea had failed in launching the“Kwangmyongsong-3” No 1, but did not yield to the setback and braced themselves up to success.)

The“Kwangmyongsong-2”was a test satellite, but the “Kwangmyongsong-3” No 2. was for a practical use. It was really a wonder.

Korea is a small nation. Now she has emerged as one of several nuclear and satellite-launching nations in spite of decades-long rigorous ban and embargo of the United States and its allies. She must be justly proud of it.

Tower Visible All Around

When we came out of the University it was still raining. We took our seats in the bus that was waiting to take us to the Tower of the Juche Idea.

Many world progressive or revolutionary people would come to see it when they visit Korea.

The height is so to say the height of the ideology. I have found no idea giving so great, profound and universal truth in all ages and places as the Juche idea.

So do they call it a tower visible all round?

In fact the tower was very high.

I thought it the highest of all the stone towers I have ever seen.

The curator proved that I was right.

It is as high as 170 ms. It was built in April 1982, on the 70th anniversary of the birth of President Kim Il Sung.

A beacon is on fire at the top of the tower soaring into the sky.

At the front of the platform stands a granite sculpture representing a worker, farmer and intellectual each holding a hammer, sickle or brush and on both sides of it were group sculptures depicting a happy life of the people.

On display at the back of it were gift stones presented from abroad when the tower was built.

The names of heads of state, prominent social activists, statesmen, Juche idea study groups and followers and

friendly organizations the world over were engraved on plaques on the altar of the tower.

This alone told us how great, truthful and attractive were the Juche idea.

There we found some from our country too, which gave us a pang.

There was a lift in the tower which brought us up to the bottom of the beacon to have a bird's-eye view of the Pyongyang city.

It was higher than the revolving restaurant at the top of the Koryo Hotel so as to have a more extensive view of the city to all directions.

Underneath was the Taedong River flowing placidly, making a picturesque scene of the city stretching on both banks of the river.

Piru took photographs in the rain.

We were followed by many visitors from home and abroad.

When we descended from the tower, we were taken to a room where an interpreter was waiting for us.

She was quite tall and a bit darkish. We had not seen a Korean with such a physical appearance.

We wished to see the city there, hearing her explanation, but we could not do it due to time constraints. Indeed, it was a tower worthy of being proud and visible all around in view of its novelty of the idea and the height of the monument.

The last day of visiting

It was a remarkable event in my life, a poet and lyricist from a small country to know of Korea in the Orient, a country above the average, and her people.

In this sense I wished to add to my knowledge of Korea.

It was still raining and the schedule of our tour came to an end, but the team leader Jahangir, Sagor and I applied to see the West Sea Barrage and started to visit it.

The bus ran in sheets of rain.

A few minutes after the car was out of the Nampho city (a port city about 40 kms away from Pyongyang) we could see the dim sight of the West Sea Barrage through the sheets of the rain, which stretched across the sea afar.

The location of the dam is unique--if you stand keeping the dam in front of you, you will see unending sea on your right and the Taedong River on the left.

A long full scene of the barrage was like an enormous dam. There was a revolving bridge on the dam at the junction between the sea and the River Taedong.

The Koreans may take pride in the bridge. If there was any ship to enter or exit, the gate of the bridge would open automatically. It is difficult to believe that the Koreans had closed up the rough sea to build such a big dam as long as eight kms in only five years.

They invested in it a lot of manpower, material and fund.

Man can tame the nature and remake it to his

advantage, but it is no easy job to dam up a rough sea and build such a gigantic structure.

We entered on a bungalow built on the highland surrounded by water and looked down upon the barrage. It was an amazing grandeur. Indeed, infinite is the power of man.

We sat on the sofas and listened to the short briefing on the history and construction details of the dam given on a TV monitor. It was touching.

We wished to walk to the end to see the barrage, but due to the inclement weather our tour was cut short.

We were very sorry for it when we left the barrage attributable to the force of self-reliance and wisdom of the heroic Korean people.

We kept to look back the coast of the West Sea and the River Taedong on our way to Pyongyang.

The West Sea Barrage left us an indelible impression.

Instead of taking us to the hotel, Mr. Pak took us to a Korean restaurant at the centre of Pyongyang city.

The restaurant was beautifully decorated with wooden panel inside. There were several small family compartments. We took our seats and then young girls came to take our orders. Being Muslim we ordered soup, beef curry and dishes with sea and octopus and some Korean dishes too.

Most of the items were hot. Mr. Pak mentioned that the Koreans love hot dishes. Anyhow, Korean dishes were

special, tasty and colorful.

The vegetable soup was very tasty. It was made with a kind of spinach, the taste of which was similar to some Bangladeshi spinach.

Korean dishes were quite different with cold and dry European and other countries' dishes in general.

They love and set great store by their traditional dishes and strive to develop them.

Being a writer, I was lucky to add to my vocabulary of dishes.

The mood was very good with the impression of the West Sea Barrage plus the taste of the Korean dishes.

In the evening we could not go to bed easily because it was the last night in Pyongyang. So we went to the billiard room of the hotel.

After a while we went to the revolving restaurant on the roof of the hotel building.

In the balcony of the top floor, we found Mr. Pak and Mr. Wang. They said smiling that they were waiting for us long there, guessing that we would come up.

I bought some expensive souvenirs for them in reward for their services.

They were very happy.

I ordered mango juice and had a good time enjoying the night view of Pyongyang. Though unfamiliar, I could not take off my eyes from the night view.

After a fairly long time I thought about the kind doctor

and the nurse who gave me 60-90 minutes massage almost everyday….

Though late at night, I thought it right to say them good-bye.

Both the doctor and the nurse were waiting for me.

I was sorry for my being late and at the same time felt warm in my heart for their sincerity.

They took my blood pressure and pushed an injection.

One more injection was yet to be pushed in. When I told the doctor that my train would depart at 10 am, he asked me to come at 8 am for the injection.

I am a foreigner. I had not produced a piece of poem for Korea. But they were so sincere in every way to treat me to the last moment of our stay. They were so considerate.

The aphorism of leader Kim Jong Il hung on the wall conveyed a special meaning.

Sincerity of the doctors is the best remedy!

That is truly a wise remark. Korean doctors kept doing their all to apply his aphorism to practice.

Indeed, Korea is a beautiful country where beautiful people live.

“Good bye, Pyongyang!”

Next morning, it was drawing nearer to our departure.

The KASS officials were waiting in the hotel lobby to see us off. We gave pose for the final photographs.

But one thing weighed on our mind.

We thought it impolite to get on a train without paying respect leaving Korea which accorded such a great hospitality to us during our stay.

The KASS officials understood it enough.

We brought some changes to our program. We decided to pay a visit just before the departure to the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on Mt. Taesong built in honor of the Anti-Japanese revolutionary martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the liberation and freedom of the homeland.

I bought some flowers from the nearby florist to lay at the cemetery. When I reached the altar, I laid down the flowers and we all bowed and stood in silence for some time to pay homage to the heroic sons and daughters of Korea. I felt gratified being able to pay tribute to the freedom fighters.

Coming down the stairs from the top of the hill I could see far the majestic building of the Kumsusan Memorial Palace where President Kim Il Sung lies in state.

The credit for the Korean people to have such a powerful socialism and land of happiness goes to his wise leadership of the Korean revolution.

I felt their adoration of the President still warmer at the moment of departure.

We returned to the hotel. From the hotel we moved on foot to the railway station.

It was close from the hotel. But we wished rather to walk the land of Pyongyang once again.

Sagar, Jahangir and I reached the station in a few minutes, but Piru and Chutu were missing. They went back to hotel to buy souvenir for Mr. Pak and Mr. Wang. However, they returned in the five minutes' time. The train was about to leave.

Though in a rush, we made time to take some photographs with the train in the background and embraced our interpreters and boarded on the train when it had already started moving.

However, there was no end in our parting words and friendly shaking hands and waving.

Gradually the landscape of Pyongyang was disappearing from our views.

“Pyongyang, Korea,

We will always remember you, and wish you only prosperity!”

We cried this over and over again in our heart. The train was running vigorously with our warm wish.

Heart-felt Voice from Afar

Many months passed by since I visited Korea.

I would picture the morning sky of Korea over the oceans and continents remembering the last whistle of the train leaving Korea in the ear.

I am now not the same man as I was before I visited Korea.

I am not an outsider on the hedge, but a writer and poet most concerned for Korea.

I have collected every bit of news about Korea in the TV and other mass media.

In these days I would feel great pleasure whenever I heard the news that Korea is going all out to build a thriving nation and makes success in the socialist construction.

I was confident that Korea would alarm the world with a rap on the door to the thriving nation in 2012.

One day in December 3 years ago I heard a news like a bolt from the blue from the radio that Korean leader Kim Jong Il passed away in the train on his tour for on-the-spot guidance. I doubted my ear.

I ran out blindly with no particular destination. I came across a man working in a publishing house in a nearby corner.

I hurriedly asked him that it is true. He answered yes.

I could not help but believe in the news. How I wished it were a wild rumour or groundless report.

Sorrow and grief swooped in my heart. I stood there for a while stone-faced and listlessly.

When I was in Korea, he was busy guiding various units on the spot day and night.

He was touring the factories, farms and units of the Korean People's Army without rest to enlighten them on the ways of making the country prosperous and living well.

Korea's leading daily Rodong Sinmun would report his tour and guidance as a topping news of the day.

While in Korea I would have got the greatest impression in his popularity.

That was the source of the Korean people's enthusiastic admiration to him rare to be seen in any other place of the world.

He was for sure a great man in our time and a model of popular leaders who dedicated his whole life to the cause for the country and people.

Though he passed away, Korea is led by Marshal Kim Jong Un.

Marshal Kim Jong Un, taking the destiny of the country and people upon his shoulders, is leading the army and people to bear up the grief with redoubled courage and efforts and turn out in building a thriving nation.

He is the very image of President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il, the leaders of the previous age, in leadership art and moral qualities.

Socialist Juche Korea is raging with all its force towards

an ever-victorious future enjoying world-wide fame and attracting the attention of world media. Korea owes this success to him.

Praises grow ever higher as the days go by, praises such as a “model of modern statesmen and military strategists,” an “ideal leader surpassing the world level,” a “young leader making a sudden meteoric rise” and so on.

I have first seen his young image in the world media when the third conference of the Workers' Party of Korea was held.

I have seen the animation of his image for the second time when he was making a speech at a military parade held in celebration of the centenary of President Kim Il Sung's birth in the new millennium.

The scene warmed my heart.

That day nearly two hundred reporters are said to have covered the scene of his making a speech and inspecting the parade.

As he was making the congratulatory speech, the foreign announcers reported quickly “Now Marshal Kim Jong Un is making a debut. The world and the Korean people are listening to his speech for the first time,” or “Nobody has foreseen this exceptional event.”

More than 12,000 media scooped his speech under the titles “Kim Jong Un era starts in Korea,” “Leader Kim Jong Un confirms final victory of Korea,” “Leader Kim Jong Un

assures succeeding of Songun politics," and so on to the audience amounting to hundreds of millions of people.

I keenly sensed in my heart his leadership ability and attraction from the fact that mass media through the world covered the photograph of Marshal Kim Jong Un in the rostrum and his speech at a military parade held in celebration of the centenary of President Kim Il Sung's birth in the new millennium .

The New York Times and Le Point too mentioned about his leadership ability and attraction.

His resonant and rolling voice appealing "All forward to the final victory!" after encouraging the army and people of Korea in his energetic speech on the rostrum still rings in my ear.

"All forward to the final victory!" This appeal is a victorious banner propelling tens of millions of the army and people of Songun Korea to building a thriving nation.

That is right. Leader Kim Jong Un succeeds the Songun policy of the previous leaders to lead Korea towards an invincible military power.

I am sure of the prosperous future of Korea because it has a promising young leader with a strong courage, mettle and iron will.

The world media says that he would be recorded as another national hero and peerless patriot in Korea's half a million year long history and bring a golden age to Korea.

I am confident and optimistic about the final victory of

Korea that will bring a golden age.

The Bangladeshi paper Natun Bangla dated last September 5 carried an article entitled “DPRK, Political, Ideological and Military Power” with the smiling portraits of President Kim Il Sung and General Kim Jong Il under the heading of “On the occasion of the 64th DPRK founding anniversary.”

The paper noted that the founding of the DPRK was a historic event that opened the way to building a unique people-centred socialist state. Then, introducing that Korea demonstrates grandeur as a political, ideological and military power to the world, it emphasized that Korea would be victorious in its struggle for the building of a thriving nation under the wise leadership of Marshal Kim Jong Un.

M. Jahangir Khan, chairman of our Songun Politics Study Group, also expressed his thoughts in the same vein.

Garib Newaz, chairman of our People's Federation and Bangladeshi Self-reliance Study Group, told in a high tone in his interview “The army and people of Korea will hold fast to the great Juche idea and Songun idea to succeed the sacred revolutionary history and tradition started in Mt. Paektu and bring about greater victories in the building of a prosperous nation.”

The building of a thriving nation in Korea is a definite fact and matter of time.

The beautiful morning glow that will usher in a golden era is about to light the sky of the Oriental Korea.

Though Oriental Korea came through thick and thin so far, it has a bright golden prospect of a political, ideological and military plus economic power.

I sincerely wish from afar the Korean people happiness in that new era.

Then I would recall the unforgettable days in Korea and sing a Koreans favorite song in spite of myself.

End

I am going to end my account of traveling the DPRK.

But I cannot help but feel conscience-stricken and remorse in the thought that I lay before the public a travelogue that is something lacking and superficial.

Frankly speaking, I feel ill at ease for failing to take an aspect deeper about the country Korea.

I beg you readers understand my position.

I am not a historian or theoretician or the less a stylist, but a poet. What is more, I had only ten-days short period permitted to stay there, so I cannot help but leave a smattering of travelogue.

But, I would be glad if my insufficient travelogue gives any help to your understanding about Korea, an Oriental country, which is now in full steam ahead towards the goal of a thriving nation.

Finally I would like to make a promise with the readers that I will try to have another opportunity to visit Korea so as to show you how Korea rises up in the world under the leadership of beloved Kim Jong Un.

I want to advise you too go to see with your own eyes what happens in Korea, as the proverb goes “Seeing is believing.”

August 2014

From the writer

The Tower of Juche Idea in Pyongyang.

With the delegates from Bangladesh Songun Study Group at the Monument to Party Founding

At the Hyangsan Hotel in the noted Mt. Myohyang

At the prominent Art Creation Center, Mansudae Art Studio

The Grand People's Study House in Pyongyang

The delegates visiting a school class at English lesson

조선인민의 모든 승리의 조직자이며 향도자인 조선로동당 만세!